



ESTOM NAT
 thanne in how grete
 filthe thise shrewes
 ben ywrapped, and
 with which cleanness
 thise good folk shyn-
 en? In this sheweth
 it wel, that to goode
 folk ne lakkethe nev-
 ermo hir medes, ne
 shrewes lakken nevermo tormentes. For alle
 thinges that ben ydoon, thilke thing,
 for which anything is don, it semeth as by
 right that thilke thing be the mede of that;
 as thus: yif a man renneth in the stadie, or
 in the forlong, for the corone, thanne lyth
 the mede in the corone for which he ren-
 neth. And I have shewed that blisfulnesse
 is thilke same good for which that alle
 thinges ben doon. Thanne is thilke same
 good purposed to the workes of mankinde
 right as a comune mede; which mede ne
 may ben disseyvered fro good folk. For no
 wight as by right, fro theenesforth that
 him lakkethe goodnesse, ne shal ben cleped
 good. for which thing, folk of goode
 maneres, hirmedes ne forsaken hem never-
 mo. for albeit so that shrewes wexen as
 wode as hem list ayeins goode folk, yit
 neverthelesse the corone of wyse men shal
 nat fallen ne faden. for foreine shrewed-
 nesse ne binimeth nat for the corages of
 goode folk hir propre honour. But yif that
 any wight rejoyse him of goodnesse that
 he hadde take fro withoute (as who seith,
 yif that any wight hadde his goodnesse of
 any other man than of himself), certes, he
 that yaf him thilke goodnesse, or ellesom
 other wight, mighte binime it him. But for
 as mocheas to every wight his owne propre
 bountee yeveth him his mede, thanne at
 erst shal he failen of mede whan he forelet
 eth to ben good. And at the laste, so as alle
 medes ben required for men wenen that
 they ben goode, who is he that wolde deme,
 that he that is right mighty of good were
 parties of mede? And of what mede shal
 he be guerdoned? Certes, of right faire
 mede and right grete aboven alle medes.
 Remember thee of thilke noble corolarie
 that I yaf thee a litel herbefore; and gader
 it togider in this manere: so as good him-
 self is blisfulnesse, thanne is it cleer and
 certain, that alle good folk ben maked blis-
 ful for they ben goode; & thilke folk that
 ben blisful, it acordeth and is covenable to
 ben goddes. Thanne is the mede of goode
 folk swich that no day shal enpeiren it, ne
 no wikkednesse ne shal derken it, ne power
 of no wight ne shal nat ameneun it, that
 is to seyn, to ben maked goddes.

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AND sin it is thus, that gooðe men ne failen nevermo of hir mede, certes, no wys man ne may doute of underpartable peyne of the shrewes; that is to say, that the peyne of shrewes ne departeth nat from himself nevermo. For so as gooðe and yvel, and peyne and medes ben contrarye, it mot nedes ben, that right as we seen bityden in guerdoun of gooðe, that also mot the peyne of yvel answer, by the contrarye party, to shrewes. Now thanne, so as bountee and promessee ben the mede to gooðe folk, also is shrewednesse itself torment to shrewes. Thanne, whoso that ever is enteeched and defouled with peyne, he ne douteth nat, that he is enteeched & defouled with yvel. Yif shrewes thanne wolen preysen himself, may it seme to hem that they ben withouten party of torment, sin they ben swiche that the interesteste wikkednesse (that is to seyn, wikked thewes, which that is the utterste & the worste kinde of shrewednesse) ne defouleth ne enteecheth nat hem only, but infecteth & evenimeth hem only, but also look on shrewes, that ben the contrarye party of gooðe men, how greet peyne felowshipeth & folweth hem! For thou hast lerned a lital heriborn, that al thing that is & hath beinge is oon, and thilke same oon is good; thanne is this the consequence, that it semeth wel, that al that is & hath beinge is good; this is to seyn, as who seyeth, that beinge and unitee and goodnesse is al oon. And in this manere it folweth thanne, that al thing that faileth to ben good, it stineth for to be and for to han any beinge; wherfore it is, that shrewes stinten for to ben that they weren. But thilke othere forme of mankinde, that is to seyn, the forme of the body withoute, sheweth yit that these shrewes weren whylom men; wherfor, when they ben perverted and torned into malice, certes, than han they forlorn the nature of mankinde. But so as only bountee and promessee may enhausen every man over other men; thanne mot it nedes be that shrewes, which that shrewednesse hath cast out of the condicioun of mankinde, ben put under the merite and the desert of men. Thanne bitydeth it, that yif thou seest a wight that be transformed into vices, thou ne mayst nat wene that he be a man.

FOR yif he be ardaunt in avaryce, and that he be a ravinour by violence of foreine riches, thou shalt seyn that he is lyke to the wolf. And yif he be felonous and withoute reste, and exerceyse his tonge to chydinges, thou shalt tyllne him to the hound. And yif he be a preyv awaitour yhid, and rejoyseth him to ravyshe by wyles, thou shalt seyn him lyke to

the fox whelpes. And yif he be distempre
and quaketh for ire, men shal wene that he
breth the corage of a youn. And yif he be
dreadful and fleinge, and dredeth thinges
that ne oughten nat to ben dred, men shal
holden him lyk to the hert. And yif he be
slow and astoned and lache, he liveth as an
asse. And yif he be light and unstedfast
of corage, & chaungeyth ay his studies, he
is lykned to briddes. And if he be ploung-
ing in foule and uncleine luxuries, he is with-
holden in the foule delceyes of the foule
world. Thanne foloweth it, that he that for-
sleth bountee and promeswe, he forletheth
to ben a man; sin he may nat passen into the
condicion of God, he is torned into a
beest.

Metre III.

BYRAS the wind aryvede the
sailes of Alixes, duk of the
contree of Narice, & his wan-
dringe shippes by the see,
into the ile theras Circes, the
faire goddessse, daughter of
the sonne, dwelleth; that medleth to hir
new gestes drinks that ben touched and
enmaled with enchantements. And after
that hir hand, mighty over the herbes, hadde
changed hir gestes into dyverse maneres;
that son of hem, is covered his face with
forme of a boor; that other is changed
into a lyoun of the contree of Marmoriike,
and his nayles and his teeth wexen; that
other of hem is neweliche chaunged into a
wolf, & howleth whan he wolde wepe; that
other goth debonairly in the hous as a
yong of Inde.

BUT albeſo that the godhed of Mer-
curie, that cleped the brid of Ar-
cadie, hath had mercy of the duke
Allices, biſeged with diuerſe yveles, and
hath vnbonded him fro the peſtilence of
his ceſſe, algates the rowers and the
mariners haddn by this ydrawn into his
mouthes & dronken the wikkede drinks.
They that weren woxen ſwyn haddn by
this ychaunged hir mete of breed, for to
eten akornes of okes. Non of hir limes ne
dwileth with hem hole, but they han loſt
the voice and the body; only hir thought
dwileth with hem ſtable, that wepeth and
dwileth the monſtruous chaunginge that
they ſuffren. O ouerlight hand (as who
ſeyth), O feble and light is the hand of
Circeſe the enchauntereſſe, that chaungeſh
the bodies of folkes into beſtes, to regard
and to compariſon of mutacioun that is
made by vices; ne the herbes of Circeſe
ne ben nat mighty, for albeſo ſo that they
may chaungen the limes of the body, al-
gates yit they may nat chaunge the hertes

for withinne is yhid the strengthe & vigor
of men, in the secree tour of hir hertes
that is to seyn, the strengthe of resoun.
But thilke venims of vyces todrawen a man
to hem more mightily than the venom of
Circes; for vyces ben so cruel that they
percen and thorough, passen the courage
withinne; and, though they ne anoye nat the
body, yit vyces wooden to destroye men by
wounde of thought.

Prose IV.

Tum ego, fateor, inquam.



GHAN seyde I thus:
I confesse and am
aknowe it, quod I
ne I ne see nat that
men may sayn, as by
right, that shrewes
ne ben chaunged in
to bestes by the
qualitee of hir soules,
albeit so that
they kepen yit the forme of the body of
mankinde. But I nolde nat of shrewes, of
which the thought cruel woodeth alwey in
to destruccioun of goode men, that it were
lueful to hem to don that.

CERTES, quod she, ne is nis nat leue-
ful to hem, as I shal wel shewe thee
in covenable place; but natheles, yif
so were that thilke that men wenen be leue-
ful to shrewes were binomen hem, so that
they ne mighte nat anoyen or doon harm
to goode men, certes, a greet partye of the
peyne to shrewes sholde ben allegged and
releved. For albeit so that this ne seme nat
credible thing, peraventure, to some folk,
yif moot it nedes be, that shrewes ben
more wrecches and unsely when they may
doon & performe that they coveiten, than
yif they mighte nat complisshen that they
coveiten. For yif so be that it be wretched-
nesse to wilne to don yvel, than is more
wretchednesse to mowen don yvel; with-
oute whiche mowinge the wretched
sholde languissh withoute effect. Than,
sin that everiche of these thinges hath his
wretchednesse, that is to seyn, wil to don
yvel & mowinge to don yvel, it moot nedes
be that they ben constrayned by three un-
selinesses, that wolen and mowen & per-
formen felonies and shrewednesses. **I**
acorde me, quod I; but I desire gretly that
shrewes losten some thilke unselinesses,
that is to seyn, that shrewes weren de-
spoyled of mowinge to don yvel.

SO shullen they, quod she, soner,
peraventure, than thou woldest; o
soner than they hemself wene to
lakken mowing to don yvel. for ther nis
nothing so late in so shorte boundes of
this lyf, that is long to abyde, nameliche.

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